

Wyoming Office of the Attorney General Division of Victim Services

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America Celebrates the Silver Anniversary of National Crime Victims' Rights Week "Justice Isn't Served Until Crime Victims Are"

Cheyenne, WY - Governor Dave Freudenthal signed a proclamation declaring April 10th - 16th as Crime Victims' Rights Week.

Twenty-five years ago, President Ronald W. Reagan declared the first National Crime Victims' Rights Week to pay tribute to crime victims and to recognize the devastating impact of violence on individuals, communities and our nation as a whole. In proclaiming the first National Crime Victims' Rights Week in 1981 and then establishing the President's Task Force on Victims of Crime, he stated, "Our commitment to criminal justice goes far deeper than our desire to punish the guilty or to deter those considering a lawless course. Our laws represent the collective moral voice of a free society - a voice that articulates our shared beliefs about the roles of civilized behavior. Both the observance of Crime Victims' Week and the creation of this Task Force are entirely consistent with principles that lie at the heart of our nation's belief in freedom under law."

During the week of April 10 to 16, 2005, the 25th anniversary of National Crime Victims' Rights Week will be observed across our nation by victims and survivors and the professionals and volunteers who assist them. This year's theme - "Justice Isn't Served Until Crime Victims Are" - emphasizes the importance of providing support and assistance to victims as a critical and core component of justice in America.

Since 1981, the field of victims' rights and services has contributed to many accomplishments that enhance individual and community safety. Today, there are over 10,000 justice system- and community-based programs that inform and educate victims about their rights, and provide supportive services to help them cope with the physical, emotional, financial and spiritual impact of crime. Over 32,000 laws have been passed at the state and federal levels that define and protect victims' rights, including constitutional amendments in 32 states. Comprehensive responses and programs have also been created that ensure a sensitive and effective response to victims of domestic and international terrorism and mass violence.

In America today, victim service programs offer a wide range of services that include crisis intervention,

counseling, safety planning, and advocacy throughout the criminal or juvenile justice system; and state victim compensation programs help victims recover from the many costs associated with criminal victimization.

According to John W. Gillis, Director of the Office for Victims of Crime within the Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice, "justice isn't served until crime victims are."

"Anyone who is truly concerned about justice should also be concerned that victims and survivors are treated with dignity and compassion, educated about their rights under law, and offered services to help them cope in the aftermath of crime," Gillis explained. "Only when we consistently serve victims in our communities are we truly serving justice."

Here in Wyoming, anyone who is victimized by crime can receive information about their rights, and the many services available to assist them. If you or someone you know is a victim of crime, there is help. Or if you'd like to volunteer for victims, many opportunities are available."

You are encouraged to join crime victims and those who serve them in commemorating National Crime Victims' Rights Week, April 10th to 16th. For additional information about the Silver Anniversary of National Crime Victims' Rights Week, crime victim assistance, or volunteer opportunities, please contact the Wyoming Division of Victim Services at 307-777-7200.